

# FORESTRY DIVISION



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## FORESTRY DIVISION

*Protecting Montana's natural resources from wildland fires through regulation and partnerships with federal, state, and local agencies, and helping Montanans achieve land stewardship and compliance with state forestry laws.*

The Forestry Division, headquartered in Missoula, is responsible for planning and implementing forestry programs through a network of field offices located across the state. The forestry program has two major functions: fire and aviation management, and service forestry. Each function is further broken down into programs and subprograms, most with statewide application. The Forestry Division has the following goals:

- Protecting the state's natural resources from wildfire, insect pests, and disease
- Sustaining or improving the natural resources of private forestland for the good of all Montanans
- Promoting and supporting conservation practices on all lands in Montana
- Enforcing the state's forest practices laws in a manner that is both fair and consistent to all parties, and that complies with the intent of the legislation
- Encouraging the maintenance, planting, and management of trees and shrubs in Montana communities

### Fire and Aviation Management

As charged by state law, DNRC protects the natural resources of the state from fire and is responsible for fire protection on all forestlands within this state that are officially classified by the department as forestlands.

#### Protection

DNRC's Fire and Aviation Management Bureau is a team of trained professionals providing wildland fire service leadership to Montana, commissioned by Montana citizens to protect the natural resources of the state by preventing and suppressing wildland fires, and accountable to Montana citizens. Presently, all wildlands in Montana have some form of fire protection. DNRC protects natural resources on state and private lands through aggressive fire prevention and protection activities. A total of 50,552,447 acres of state-owned and private lands are protected as detailed in state resource management plans, or as required by law (see Table 12). The Fire and Aviation Program staffs 65 engine (and water tender) companies and 5 helicopters to provide direct protection of 5.2 million acres. The program also loans over 350 engines and water tenders to local fire agencies, primarily in the eastern part of the state. DNRC has been given the responsibility to coordinate all contract responses of fire department resources that cross county lines.

### Direct Protection

DNRC provides direct protection to a total of 5,168,942 acres consisting of 3,498,511 acres of state and private land; 694,665 acres of U. S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands; 4,551 acres of Tribal/U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) lands; 18,117 acres of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) lands; 2,776 acres of U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) lands; and 950,322 acres of U. S. Forest Service (USFS) lands. Privately owned forested lands within the boundaries of an incorporated city are included. Priority is given to the protection of forested lands owned by the state.

### State/County Cooperative Fire Protection

Under the State/County Cooperative Fire Protection Program, the department has secondary protection responsibility for 45,309,480 acres of state-owned and privately owned non-forested lands. These lands are predominantly found in eastern Montana. A network of 400 fire departments provides initial response to wild-fires in the 56 counties. DNRC assists on fires that escape the counties' capabilities and provides them with training, prevention materials, and equipment.

### Contracted Federal Protection

Fire protection of a total of 1,744,456 acres of state and private lands is subcontracted to federal agencies.

**Table 12**  
**Fire Protection by DNRC in FY 2003**

Total Acres	Category	State and Private Lands (Acres)	Public Lands (Acres)
5,168,942	DNRC Direct Protection State and Private Lands BLM Lands USFS Lands Tribal/BIA Lands BOR Lands FWS Lands	3,498,511	694,665 950,322 4,551 2,776 18,117
45,309,480	State/County Cooperative Fire Protection <sup>1</sup>	45,309,480	
1,744,456	Federal Direct Protection <sup>2</sup> Protected by BIA (Tribal) Protected by BLM Protected by USFS Protected by FWS	147,359 68,689 1,491,538 36,870	
52,222,878	<b>TOTALS</b>	50,552,447	1,670,431

1. Includes all 56 counties in Montana

2. Subcontracted to federal agencies

## Fire Prevention

The Fire Prevention Program's purpose is to reduce the number and severity of wildfires occurring each year. The program is made up of three parts.

- Engineering through prescribed fire (and airshed management), fuel treatment programs, and application of DNRC's wildland/residential development guidelines
- Education through homeowner programs (like Firewise Communities), workshops, and production of printed and electronic material
- Enforcement through Forest Fire Regulations, fire cause investigation, and forest restrictions when applicable

Wildland/residential interface areas continue to be emphasized through National Fire Plan funding. Ongoing projects include fuel treatment, home fire safety evaluations, and prioritizing communities at risk.

DNRC has completed its fire risk rating on 95 percent of the direct protection areas that are determined to be high risk. Several hundred plats of proposed developments are evaluated annually, and recommendations are then submitted to county commissioners based on DNRC's Fire Protection Guidelines. The Fire Protection Guidelines for Wildland/Residential Interface Development continue to be applied to existing and proposed developments throughout the state.

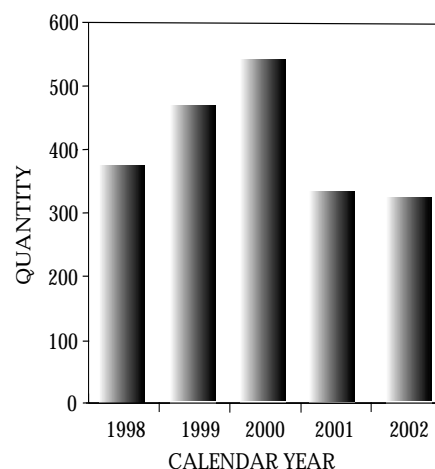
Major issues in FY 2003 include implementation and monitoring of programs funded by the National Fire Plan, implementation of a revised forest restriction process, and promotion of ongoing educational programs.

## Fire Suppression

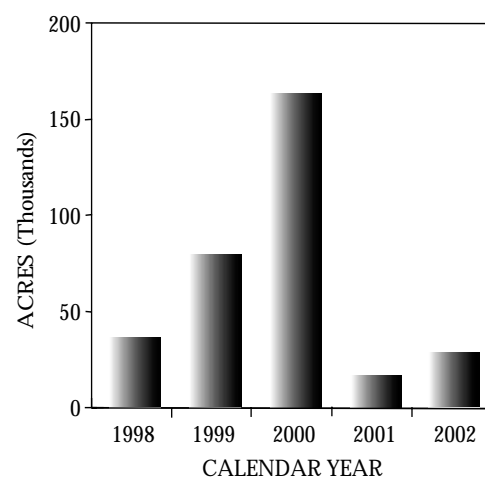
Through the Fire Suppression Program, DNRC directly protects 5,168,942 acres of state, private, and federal lands; assists all 56 cooperating counties with fires exceeding their capabilities on 45,309,480 acres of state and private lands; and subcontracts fire protection on 1,744,456 acres of state and private lands to the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (Tribal). DNRC also provides support and assistance to federal fire agencies and other states when appropriate.

The number of fires that occurred during the 2002 fire season was below the five-year average; 322 fire incidents that burned a total of 28,394 acres were reported (see Figures 9 and 10). The average number of fires over the last five years is 408 per year, and the average number of acres burned over each of the last five years is 67,336. The annual acreage burned varied from 16,758 acres in 2001 to 167,582 acres in 2000.

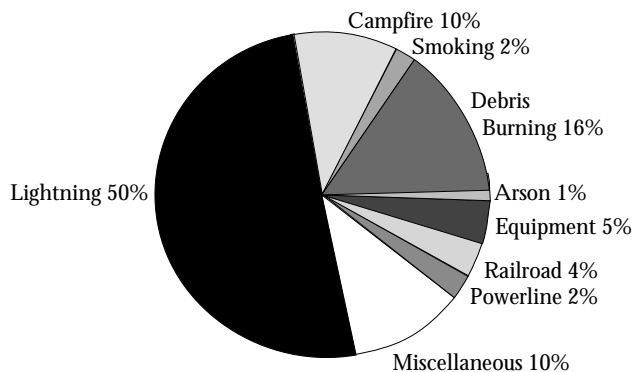
**Figure 9**  
Number of Fires on State-Protected Land



**Figure 10**  
Acres Burned on State-Protected Land



**Figure 11**  
**Percentage of Fires, by Cause**  
**(5-Year Average)**



Lightning is the single most frequent cause, starting 50 percent of the fires (see Figure 11). DNRC contained an average of 92 percent of the direct protection fires at under 10 acres in size. The charts are based on direct protection and county assist fires.

## Fire Training

The Fire and Aviation Management Bureau provides training in fire prevention, detection, investigation, suppression, aviation, communications, safety, prescribed fire, participation on incident management teams, and wildland fire training instruction.

In FY 2003, DNRC conducted or consolidated 212 courses in wildland fire training serving 2,203 volunteer and career firefighters in 56 counties throughout the State/County Cooperative Fire Protection Program and DNRC's seasonal and fire support personnel. Fifty-four Basic Wildland and Intermediate Wildland Firefighting courses with 1,030 attending were conducted by DNRC specifically for local government forces. In addition, DNRC cooperated in each of the five Northern Rockies zones that completed approximately 250 courses serving over 5,000 interagency firefighters.

To meet the need for firefighters for the 2003 fire season, DNRC facilitated the training of National Guard, aviation, and support personnel.

DNRC is actively involved in the development of overhead and management personnel within the agency in cooperation with other wildland fire agencies, in local communities, statewide, and at the Northern Rockies Interagency Training Center in Missoula.

## Development and Support

Through its Equipment Development Program, DNRC obtains federal excess property and develops it into fire suppression equipment and vehicles. This equipment is used primarily to support the State/County Cooperative Fire Protection Program. In FY 2003, DNRC obtained supplies, vehicles, and aircraft that have a total value of \$944,330 through the Federal Excess Property Program. The equipment acquired included a total of 30 vehicles and aircraft.

The 89 individual development projects that were completed in FY 2003 are listed in Table 13.

**Table 13**  
**Development Projects in FY 2003**

Develop Type 6 (200-gallon) wildland engines	10
Develop Type 5 (500-gallon) engine	1
Develop Type 3 (750-gallon) engines	2
Develop shop trucks	2
Construct flatbeds	20
Rebuild pump panels	28
Rebuild pump heads	26

## Aviation

The Aviation Section operates and maintains a fleet of eight aircraft. The fleet consists of five helicopters and three fixed-wing airplanes. The three fixed-wing aircraft, Cessna 180 series that are used primarily for fire patrol and personnel transportation, are located in Helena, Missoula, and Kalispell. The section operates three Bell UH-1 series type 2 helicopters at Helena, Missoula, and Kalispell in support of DNRC's initial attack fire suppression program. Two light, type 3 helicopters (Bell 206 B-III) are stationed in Helena. One is owned by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). DNRC maintains this aircraft and provides pilot services to DEQ. In return, DNRC reserves the right to use this aircraft for fire missions. The second light helicopter is used as a backup aircraft or for additional coverage.

In FY 2003 the aircraft flew a total of 954 hours. Other program statistics are shown in Table 14 below.

**Table 14**  
**Aviation Program Accomplishments in FY 2003**

Water/retardant dropped	897,802 gallons
Fire administration	28 hours
Fire detection/reconnaissance	481 hours
Fire—other	30 hours
Fire suppression—initial attack and extended attack	267 hours
Fire suppression—project <sup>1</sup>	35 hours
Fire training	26 hours
Non-fire missions	71 hours
False alarm	16 hours
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>954 hours</b>

1. Project fires are large fires with organized fire management teams.

The FY 2003 fire season was an average year for aircraft hours utilized in initial attack and suppression. The state contracted for a medium helicopter that operated primarily out of Libby. The average price for the contract medium helicopter in FY 2003 was \$4,000 per day, plus approximately \$1,500 per hour operating cost. That is \$16,000 per day to operate that aircraft, compared to \$7,000 per day for the state aircraft with a similar load capacity.

## National Fire Plan

After the 2000 wildfire season, Congress authorized funding within the U.S. Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to implement the National Fire Plan (NFP). The National Fire Plan is a long-term strategy for reducing the effects of catastrophic wildfires throughout the nation. There are five key points to the National Fire Plan.

- Increase in fire suppression capabilities (firefighting)
- Rehabilitation of burned areas and restoration of landscapes
- Reduction of hazardous fuels
- Assistance to communities
- Accountability to the public and to Congress

The Western Governors' Association has developed a *10-Year Comprehensive Strategy* and an implementation plan, titled *A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment*. These documents provide direction at the national, regional, state, and local levels on National Fire Plan issues.

NFP funding to the states occurs under the community assistance point and is made available through the USFS state and private forestry programs. DNRC has responsibility for delivery of these programs on state-owned and private lands in Montana.

The DNRC NFP Program is implemented primarily within the Forestry Division's Fire and Aviation Management Bureau and Service Forestry Bureau. The National Fire Plan is delivered, wherever appropriate, through existing state and private forestry programs. These programs are:

- County Cooperative Fire Program (Fire and Aviation Management Bureau)
- State Fire Assistance Program (Fire and Aviation Management Bureau)
- Private Forestry Assistance Program (Service Forestry Bureau)
- Stewardship Program (Service Forestry Bureau)

The NFP accomplishments for these programs are included in this section. For more information about these programs, or to learn about accomplishments separate from the National Fire Plan, refer to the sections of this report called Fire and Aviation Management and Service Forestry Programs.

## Volunteer and Rural Fire Assistance

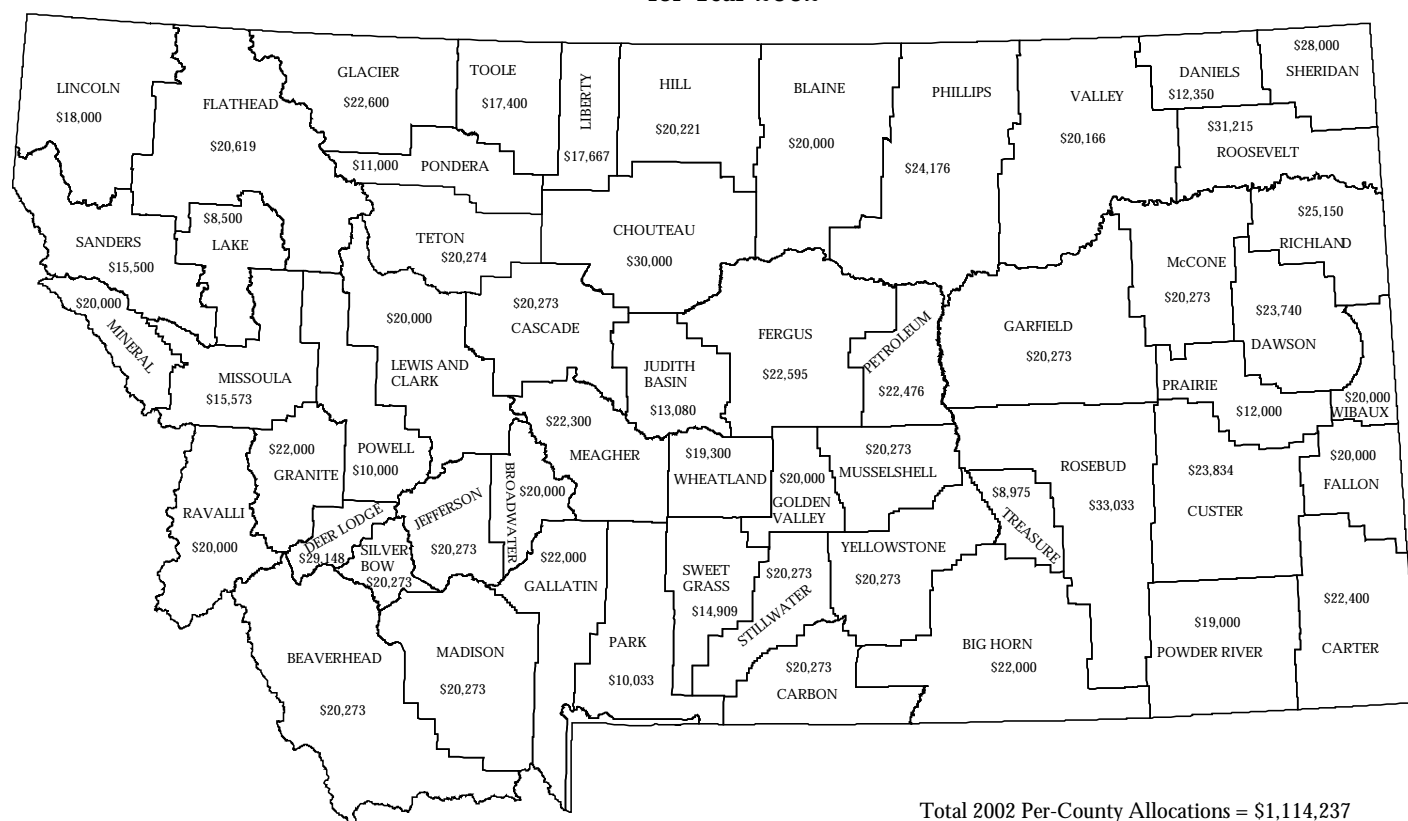
The Volunteer and Rural Fire Assistance (VFA/RFA) Program provides assistance to county fire agencies for equipment, training, and fire prevention materials. Adding National Fire Plan funding resulted in a grant program with more money than ever before. Again in 2002, the Department of the Interior



agencies (BLM, FWS, and BIA) contributed their budgeted Rural Fire Assistance Program dollars to be combined with Volunteer Fire Assistance funds granted by the USDA Forest Service. The total assistance available in Montana exceeded \$1.1 million again this year. DNRC and its partners were recognized with the Ben Franklin Award, given by the Forest Service annually to one state for excellence in delivering these programs.

Figure 12 shows the VFA/RFA funding distribution by county.

**Figure 12**  
**Montana VFA/RFA Allocations per County**  
**for Year 2002**



## State Fire Assistance

Administered through the State Fire Assistance Program, NFP-funded projects are under way in the following Montana communities.

Alberton	Frenchtown	Libby	Seeley Lake
Big Timber	Greenough/Potomac	Lincoln	Swan Lake
Butte	Helena	Missoula	Virginia City
Choteau	Hungry Horse	Philipsburg	West Glacier
Columbia Falls	Kalispell	Polson	Whitefish
Florence			

All of these projects address one or more of the following areas.

### **Hazardous Fuel Reduction**

Fuel reduction projects and vegetation treatments have been identified as a means of mitigating wildfire hazards. Projects of this type include fuel breaks, thinning, pruning, landscape modifications, etc.

### **Information and Education in the Wildland/Urban Interface**

Homeowners and local government bear much of the responsibility for improving the defensibility of homes in the interface, but may lack knowledge and information regarding what needs to be done and how to do it.

### **Homeowner and Community Action**

Creating conditions in and around individual structures that will limit the transmission of fire from wildland to structures is basic to reducing the fire hazard in the interface. This is a responsibility of homeowners and communities.

A cost-share program in and around Libby provides homeowners with assistance in reducing hazardous fuels around their homes.

### **Defensible Space Home Audit Program**

The Fire and Aviation Management Bureau has completed its two-year Defensible Space Home Audit Program. This program, which was well received by the public, provided free home inspections for homeowners living in the wildland/urban interface. During these inspections, homeowners spent an hour or two with an official from their local fire department, examining their structures and landscape for fire hazards. Homeowners were given a copy of the inspection report, and a copy was forwarded to the DNRC fire prevention specialist. In all, close to 2,000 home inspections were performed, and the data from these inspections will assist the DNRC Fire Prevention Program in targeting education to address specific homeowner safety concerns.

### **Private Forestry Assistance**

Within the Service Forestry Bureau's Stewardship Program, National Fire Plan funding supported a cost-share grant program for private landowners. In a partnership with Montana's conservation districts (CDs), DNRC service foresters assisted landowners in implementing land management activities that rehabilitated burned areas and/or reduced the risk of wildfires to their homes and property. Key outcomes of this cost-share program were the development of approved land management plans and treatment of private land acreage. Table 15 shows the distribution of projects in Montana.

<b>Table 15</b> <b>Distribution of Private Forestry Assistance Projects</b>	
<b>Conservation District</b>	<b>Number of Projects</b>
Broadwater	14
Deer Lodge Valley	3
Eastern Sanders County	7
Fergus	1
Flathead	6
Granite	3
Green Mountain	11
Jefferson Valley	5
Lake County	6
Lewis and Clark	6
Lincoln	12
Mineral County	15
Missoula	75
North Powell	4
Park	4
Powder River	3
Stillwater	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>177</b>

This program has ended, with no additional funding available through the National Fire Plan. It will be replaced with the new Forest Lands Enhancement Program, which will provide similar assistance to eligible landowners.

## Service Forestry Programs

DNRC's service forestry programs provide products and services to various client groups and individuals. The State Nursery grows seedlings for private conservation plantings and reforestation of state-owned lands. Education emphasizing the stewardship and care of forestlands is presented to private forest owners and resource professionals. Communities are assisted with the care and planting of their community forests. Montana's forest laws are upheld. Private forestland improvements are administered using federal cost-share funds. Forest health problems are identified and monitored statewide.

Bureau officials are strategically involved with coordinating and delivering National Fire Plan programs (see preceding section of this report). One example is conservation district and service forestry officials, working together, created a cost-share program to help forest landowners impacted by the fires in 2000. This program continued in FY 2002 and 2003. In addition to assisting landowners impacted by fires in 2000 and 2001, the cost-share program also assists forest landowners with fuel hazard reduction to reduce wildlife risk and severity. To date, the Service Forestry NFP has provided over \$218,000 to 140 landowners to treat more than 1,500 acres.

## State Nursery

DNRC's nursery produces, sells, and distributes seedlings for conservation plantings such as reforestation, farmstead windbreaks, fire restoration, shelterbelts, wildlife habitat, living snow fences, stream bank stabilization, and other conservation uses. The nursery provides seedlings to private landowners in Montana, the DNRC Trust Land Management Division, the Conservation Reserve Program, Tribal agencies, the Forest Lands Enhancement Program, the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Pheasants Forever, and numerous other conservation programs and organizations.

In FY 2003 the nursery sold 834,225 conservation seedlings and produced 65,260 seedlings for reforestation of school trust lands, for a total of 899,485 seedlings, as itemized in Table 16.

**Table 16**  
**Nursery Seedling Sales from FY 1999 to FY 2004**

Fiscal Year	Conservation Seedling Program				Trust Land Seedling Program			Total Nursery Production
	Seedling Production	Seedlings Delivered	Nursery Revenue	Nursery Expenditures	Seedlings Requested	Seedlings Delivered	Seedling Expenditures	
1999	903,800	859,750	\$244,427	\$244,089	127,565	130,326	\$39,231	1,034,126
2000	740,294	712,230	\$272,142	\$272,799	82,130	79,592	\$41,209	819,886
2001	927,677	881,877	\$346,884	\$339,072	201,334	173,341	\$44,767	1,101,018
2002	961,972	902,672	\$368,912	\$363,263	126,300	98,623	\$43,189	1,060,595
2003	892,500	834,225	\$327,836	\$321,031	81,050	65,260	\$39,467	957,760
2004 est.	1,023,400	935,950	\$355,500	\$350,000	103,825			1,127,225

Seedling sales decreased in FY 2003 because of reduced requests for school trust land seedlings and greatly reduced sales in eastern Montana due to the extended drought. Revenue received from conservation seedling sales decreased by 11.1 percent in FY 2003 to \$327,836. All nursery program expenditures were recovered from the sale of seedlings, with \$6,805 carried over to FY 2004 in the nursery special revenue account for future capital equipment upgrades.

**Table 17**  
**Conservation Seedling Use in FY 2003**

Conservation Practice	Number of Seedlings	Number of Landowners
Reforestation	455,971	92
Wildlife habitat	115,100	146
Farmstead windbreaks	141,550	534
Field shelterbelts	49,525	94
Stream stabilization	33,025	30
Living snow fences	3,625	18
Erosion control	4,225	14
All other uses	31,204	86
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>834,225</b>	<b>1,014</b>

DNRC nursery seedlings were planted in every county in the state with the greatest number going to Big Horn, Ravalli, Missoula, Cascade, Fergus, and Lewis and Clark Counties. One thousand fourteen landowners planted state-grown conservation seedlings. The numbers of seedlings used in various conservation practices are itemized in Table 17.

Nursery staff authored and published the *Inside Forests* article titled "A Seedling Handling, Planting, and Care Guide." The publication is specific to Montana and will help landowners achieve high seedling survival rates and conservation goals.

Establishment and maintenance of seed orchards at the nursery ensures the long-term availability of Montana-adapted plant materials to landowners in the state. The nursery maintains 40 seed orchards of selected plant materials adapted to the numerous environments present in Montana. In FY 2003, the nursery collected, processed, or purchased 482 pounds of seed from the seed orchards, private vendors, or field collections in the state. Extensive conifer cone collections were completed to obtain seed for fire reforestation efforts.

## Forest Pest Management

This program provides pest surveys, training, and technical services to help recognize and manage damaging insects and diseases in Montana's forests. These activities are done in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service's Northern Region Forest Health Protection Group.

Douglas-fir beetle populations continued to be high in many parts of western Montana, particularly in forest areas that were significantly affected by fire in 2000 and 2001. Populations of mountain pine beetle in lodgepole pine stands continued to expand in the Lolo, Flathead, and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forests in western Montana. The number of acres on which mortality caused by mountain pine beetles was recorded more than doubled in 2002, to more than 261,300 acres on all ownerships.

In 2002 aerial surveyors mapped 54,444 acres of defoliation by western spruce budworm in the Beaverhead, Deerlodge, Helena, and Gallatin National Forests east of the Continental Divide. Western false hemlock looper defoliated Douglas-fir on the Flathead Indian Reservation, east of Libby, along the north side of Flathead Lake, and along the Clark Fork River between Rock Creek and Beavertail Hill. Extremely heavy defoliation of Douglas-fir by Douglas-fir tussock moth occurred on approximately 200 acres of private land in the vicinity of Loon Lake, northwest of Polson, in 2002. No gypsy moths were caught in the state in 2002.

Mortality and growth losses from root disease continued to be high throughout the state. The effect of the fires of 2000 and 2001 on root diseases is one of opportunity. The tree species that are best adapted to low intensity, high frequency fires are those species that are also root-disease-tolerant, such as western larch and ponderosa pine. In the root-diseased areas that burned, there is an opportunity to reduce the effects from root disease by planting these species or encouraging their natural regeneration.

Dwarf mistletoe continued to cause losses of approximately 33 million cubic feet annually, mostly to Douglas-fir, western larch, and lodgepole pine. Fire events that kill infected trees will reduce the population of dwarf mistletoes.

White pine blister rust continued to be present throughout the range of five-needle pines (limber pine, whitebark pine, and western white pine) in the state and was most severe in the northwestern portion, where it continued to cause extensive mortality in western white pine.

Elytroderma needle blight continued to be heavy in ponderosa pine in localized areas across western and central Montana. Foliar disease activity was generally light throughout Montana in 2002.

Some of the FY 2003 program accomplishments are listed in Table 18.

<b>Table 18</b> <b>Forest Pest Management Activities in FY 2003</b>	
Technical assistance to private and industrial land managers	57 assists
Professionals trained in basic pest identification	24
Professionals trained in advanced pest management	24
Loggers and private landowners trained in pest identification and management	18
Pest samples identified and management treatments recommended	23
Aerial survey completed and sketch maps distributed to unit offices	3 million acres
DNRC timber sale analyses written	3

The program, along with USFS, also completed and distributed the annual *Montana Insect and Disease Conditions* report.

The third year of work was completed under a mutual contract developed by Montana and Idaho for forest pathology services and funded by a USFS grant.

### Forestry Assistance

The Forestry Assistance Program provides a range of services to private forest landowners and economic development organizations. By conveying forestry knowledge, DNRC helps Montanans practice healthy environmental and economic forestland stewardship.

In FY 2003, DNRC provided 1,295 forestry assists, including 87 timber sale assists, 94 National Fire Plan assists, and 58 informational and educational assists. Seventy insect and disease prevention and suppression assists helped Montana landowners treat 1,096 acres. In FY 2003, production of 4,365 thousand board feet (MBF) resulted from 31 assists on 2,738 acres of non-industrial forestlands.

Service foresters provided 1,550 person days of education in a variety of projects including Streamside Management/Best Management Practices (BMP) workshops, the 2003 Forestry Expo, county fair exhibits, school outreach, tree planting, watershed education workshops, and more. Service foresters also increased partnerships between DNRC and other agencies, schools, and small groups, resulting in greater collaboration and project effectiveness.

### Timber Slash

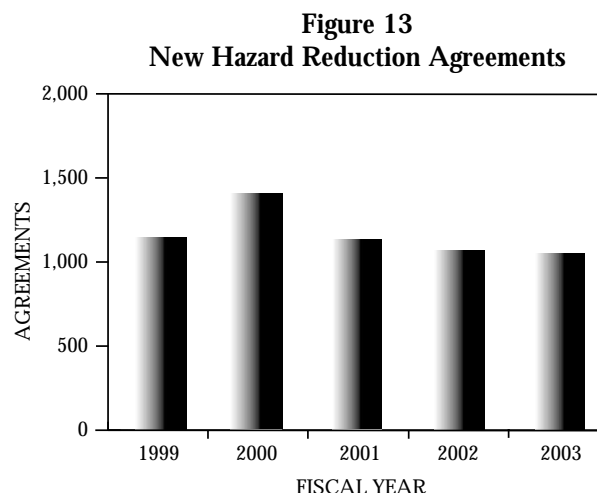
The Timber Slash Program implements state laws pertaining to control of timber slash and debris on private land to minimize wildfire hazards. The department carries out its responsibilities by entering into a bonded contract, called a Hazard Reduction Agreement (HRA), with the private party in charge of each cutting. The program handled 1,051 new HRAs in FY 2003 (see Figure 13), while another 1,273 HRAs were certified and closed. Those numbers are a 1.5 percent decrease

in new HRAs and a 10.7 percent increase in closings, compared to FY 2002 levels, which can be attributed to the declining price of lumber.

In FY 2003, the Timber Slash Program collected \$95,008 in administrative fees. In addition, a total of \$58,249 was collected and distributed to Montana State University's Extension Forestry Program.

## Forest Practices

The Forest Practices Program provides information and education about forestry BMPs to individuals, groups, corporations, and other agencies. The program includes standards for all forest practices conducted in streamside management zones (SMZs). The program helps people comply with voluntary and mandatory measures designed to protect soil and water resources during timber harvesting operations. In FY 2003, the services listed in Table 19 were provided.



**Table 19**  
**Forest Practices Activities in FY 2003**

BMP pre-harvest informational packages mailed to landowners	1,051
On-site consultations	116
Post-harvest evaluations	23
Alternative practices issued	40
SMZ warnings issued	14

In cooperation with the Montana Loggers Association, DNRC conducted SMZ/BMP workshops in seven Montana communities for 157 loggers and landowners.

## Community Forestry

Now in its thirteenth year as a national program created in the 1990 Farm Bill, the Urban and Community Forestry Program continues to grow in Montana. The mission of the program remains the same: to have a viable program in every community in the state. However, the needs of Montana communities continue to change and expand. Wildland/urban interface, urban sprawl, and community planning have added a new complexity to program fundamentals like tree planting, maintenance, and removal. As more Montanans come to appreciate natural areas and resources within their cities and towns, the program becomes more and more relevant to them.

The program assists community leaders, volunteers, local governments, and the tree care industry with technical assistance, planning, funding for local programs, volunteer coordination, and education. The program works closely with several major partners, including federal agencies, Montana RC&D areas, the university system, and private organizations. Staff also participate in the Montana League of Cities and Towns, local tree and park boards, and volunteer organizations.

Major categories of assistance are shown in Table 20.

<b>Table 20</b> <b>Major Categories of Community Forestry Activities in FY 2003</b>	
Communities with active programs	70
Montana "Tree City USAs" <sup>1</sup>	36
Communities receiving technical assistance	95
Technology transfer activities (workshops, presentations, conferences, training sessions)	161

1. "Tree City" is a national program through the Arbor Day Foundation.

Highlights of the Community Forestry Program for FY 2003 follow.

For the third year, the Montana Urban and Community Forestry Program offered the Arbor Day Grants Program. Any community in the state wishing to celebrate Arbor Day could apply for a \$150 grant to help with its event. Communities with Tree City USA designations qualified for a \$300 grant. The program awarded 62 grants for a total of \$12,300, which is an increase of nearly 30 percent from last year. Nearly 100 communities celebrated Arbor Day in Montana; the official Arbor Day Celebration took place in Helena on April 25 with a special guest, Governor Judy Martz. Holding an Arbor Day Celebration is one of the requirements for a community to receive a Tree City USA designation.

Another significant accomplishment for the program this year was the addition of eight Tree City USA communities, for a statewide total of 36. All eight communities were new to the program. The program offered the Tree City USA Reward Program Grant for the third year, and each of the new communities received a \$500 grant for its program. Up to five more communities may be designated new Tree Cities next year.

The Montana Community Forestry Council has changed its name to the Montana Urban and Community Forestry Association, passed revisions to its bylaws, and formed a committee to work on changes and updates to the Five-Year Strategic Plan for 2003-2008. The association plans to present urban and community forestry awards at the upcoming Montana League of Cities and Towns' Annual Conference in Billings this October.

The program continues to be active in the Rocky Mountain Chapter (RMC) of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). This fall, ISA-RMC and the Montana Urban and Community Forestry Program will host a Basic Tree Climbing and Safety in Rigging Workshop in Billings for tree care professionals across the state. Additionally, the Urban and Community Forestry Program coordinator is serving as the Montana representative to ISA.